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Why isn't the CBD as cool as Burwood?

Paul Nicolaou



It's crazy that downtown Sydney has fewer than 30,000 people living in it. Our city – postcode area 2000 and nearby – could easily support a residential population of 200,000.

Having more city residents will light the fuse for a vibrant night-time economy and help make Sydney a 24-hour city.

Cities such as New York, London and Paris have done this for generations. Think of cool neighborhoods, such as Manhattan's Upper West Side.

We keep looking for the "secret sauce" when the recipe for economic growth is obvious. People make the difference.

Look at Burwood, named recently as one of the coolest neighborhoods on the planet presenting a lesson for Premier Chris Minns, his government and all other Sydney councils.

Burwood Mayor John Faker and his community are blessed in being a public transport hub.

Trains on numerous rail lines stop there, bus routes are plentiful and a North Burwood Metro station is coming.

Burwood Council embraced the opportunity of being at the crossroads of the city.

It made the suburb a thriving place where people want to live, eat, shop and socialise – day and night. Its status as a special entertainment precinct is at the heart of Burwood's success.

Instead of treating nightlife as a nuisance, Burwood embraces it.

Other councils fall for the trap of imposing suffocating over regulation.

So what would happen if the CBD's live-in population increased dramatically?

Not only would the night-time economy flourish, there would also be no need to close Glebe Island, Sydney Harbour's only remaining deepwater port, when the CBD and Parramatta Rd are housing supply opportunities.

Sydney has many older buildings that could be remastered for residential use, particularly as affordable build-to-rent properties.

People living in the city will help create a 24-hour city, but it has to be made easier for Sydneysiders, visitors and workers to get there and home again. This is why Business Sydney has urged Transport Minister John Graham to allow 24-hour Metro and heavy rail services on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

Let's make the CBD a cool neighbourhood like Burwood.

Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney